NUMB. CCCVII.

The SPECTATOR.

—Verſate diu quid ferre recuſent
Quid valeant humeri—— Hor.

Thurſday, February 21. 1712

am ſo well pleaſed with the following Letter, that I am in hopes it will not be a diſagreeable preſent to the Publick.

I R,

THOUGH I believe none of your Readers more admire your agreeable manner of ting up Trifles than my ſelf, yet as your Spe-ions are now ſwelling into Volumes, and in all probability paſs down to future Ages, thinks I would have no ſingle Subject in them, rein the general Good of Mankind is con-'d, left unfiniſhed.

have a long time expected with great Impati-, that you would enlarge upon the ordinary kes which are committed in the Education of Children. I the more eaſily flatter'd my ſelf you would one time or other reſume this Con-ion, becauſe you tell us that your 168th Pa-as only compoſed of a few broken Hints; ding my ſelf hitherto diſappointed, I have ed to ſend you my own Thoughts on this d.

member *Pericles*, in his famous Oration at funeral of thoſe *Athenian* young Men who ed in the *Samian* Expedition, has a Thought much celebrated by ſeveral Ancient Criticks, ly, That the Loſs which the Common-ſuffered by the Deſtruction of its Youth, like the Loſs which the Year would ſuffer the Deſtruction of the Spring. The Prejudice ich the Publick ſuſtains from a wrong Educa-of Children, is an Evil of the ſame Nature, it in a manner ſtarves Poſterity, and defrauds Country of thoſe Perſons, who, with due might make an eminent Figure in their re-ive Poſts of Life.

have ſeen a Book written by *Juan Huartes*, niſh Phyſician, Entitled, *Examen de Ingenios*, rein he lays it down as one of his firſt Poſiti-, that Nothing but Nature can qualifie a Man Learning; and that without a proper Tempe-ment for the particular Art or Science which he ies, his utmoſt Pains and Application, aſſiſted the ableſt Maſters, will be to no purpoſe. illuſtrates this by the Example of *Tully*'s *Marcus*.

Cicero, in order to accompliſh his Son in that of Learning which he deſigned him for, ſent to *Athens*, the moſt celebrated Academy at time in the World, and where a vaſt Con-, out of the moſt Polite Nations, could but furniſh the young Gentleman with a Mul-of great Examples, and Accidents that inſenſibly have inſtructed him in his deſign-Studies: He placed him under the Care of *Cra-*, who was one of the greateſt Philoſophers Age, and, as if all the Books which were ſince written, had not been ſufficient for , he compoſed others on purpoſe for him; ſtanding all this, Hiſtory informs us, that *Marcus* proved a meer Blockhead, and that Na-ture (who it ſeems was even with the Son for her Prodigality to the Father) rendered him inca-pable of improving by all the Rules of Eloquence, the Precepts of Philoſophy, his own Endeavours, and the moſt refined Converſation in *Athens*. This Author therefore propoſes, that there ſhould be certain Tryers or Examiners appointed by the State to inſpect the Genius of every particular Boy, and to allot him the Part that is moſt ſuita-ble to his natural Talents.

'*Plato* in one of his Dialogues tells us, that *Socrates*, who was the Son of a Midwife, uſed to ſay, that as his Mother, tho' ſhe was very Skillful in her Profeſſion, could not deliver a Woman, un-leſs ſhe was firſt with Child; ſo neither could he himſelf raiſe Knowledge out of a Mind, where Nature had not planted it.

'Accordingly the Method this Philoſopher took, of inſtructing his Scholars by ſeveral Interrogato-ries or Queſtions, was only helping the Birth, and bringing their own Thoughts to light.

'The *Spaniſh* Doctor abovementioned, as his Specu-lations grow more refined, aſſerts that every kind of Wit has a particular Science correſponding to it, and in which alone it can be truly Excellent. As to thoſe Genius's, which may ſeem to have an e-qual Aptitude for ſeveral things, he regards them as ſo many unfiniſhed Pieces of Nature wrought off in haſte.

'There are, indeed, but very few to whom Na-ture has been ſo unkind, that they are not capa-ble of ſhining in ſome Science or other. There is a certain Byaſs towards Knowledge in every Mind, which may be ſtrengthened and improved by proper Applications.

'The Story of *Clavius* is very well known; he was entered in a Colledge of Jeſuits, and, after having been tryed at ſeveral Parts of Learning, was upon the Point of being diſmiſſed as an hope-leſs Blockhead, till one of the Fathers took it in-to his Head to make an eſſay of his Parts in Geo-metry, which it ſeems hit his Genius ſo luckily that he afterwards became one of the greateſt Ma-thematicians of the Age. It is commonly thought that the Sagacity of theſe Fathers, in diſcovering the Talent of a young Student, has not a little contributed to the Figure which their Order has made in the World.

'How different from this manner of Education is that which prevails in our own Country? Where nothing is more uſual than to ſee Forty or Fifty Boys of ſeveral Ages, Tempers and In-clinations, ranged together in the ſame Claſs, em-ployed upon the ſame Authors, and enjoyned the ſame Tasks? Whatever their natural Genius may be, they are all to be made Poets, Hiſtorians, and Orators alike. They are all obliged to have the ſame Capacity, to bring in the ſame Tale of Verſe, and to furniſh out the ſame Portion of Proſe. Every Boy is bound to have as good a

'Me-

as the Captain of the Form. To be brief, ... adapting Studies to the particular Genius ... Youth, we expect from the young Man, ... should adapt his Genius to his Studies. ... must confess, is not so much to be imputed to the Instructor, as to the Parent, who 'will never be brought to believe, that his Son is 'not capable of performing as much as his Neighbours, and that he may not make him whatever 'he has a Mind to.

'If the present Age is more laudable than those 'which have gone before it in any single Particular, 'it is in that generous Care which several well-disposed Persons have taken in the Education of poor 'Children; and as in these Charity Schools there is 'no Place left for the over-weening Fondness of a 'Parent, the Directors of them would make them 'beneficial to the Publick, if they consider'd the 'Precept which I have been thus long inculcating. 'They might easily, by well examining the Parts of 'those under their Inspection, make a just Distribution of them into proper Classes and Divisions, 'and allot to them this or that particular Study, as 'their Genius qualifies them for Professions, Trades, 'Handicrafts, or Service by Sea or Land.

'How is this kind of Regulation wanting in the 'three great Professions!

'Dr. *South* complaining of Persons who took 'upon them Holy Orders, tho' altogether unqualified for the Sacred Function, says somewhere, 'that many a Man runs his Head against a Pulpit, 'who might have done his Country excellent Service at a Plough-tail.

'In like manner many a Lawyer, who makes but 'an indifferent Figure at the Bar, might have made 'a very elegant Waterman, and have shined at the '*Temple* Stairs, tho' he can get no Business in the 'House.

'I have known a Corn-cutter, who with a right 'Education would have been an excellent Physician.

'To descend lower, are not our Streets filled 'with sagacious Draymen, and Politicians in Liveries? We have several Taylors of six Foot high, 'and meet with many a broad pair of Shoulders 'that are thrown away upon a Barber, when perhaps at the same time we see a pigmy Porter reeling under a Burthen, who might have managed a 'Needle with much Dexterity, or have snapped his 'Fingers with great Ease to himself, and Advantage 'to the Publick.

'The *Spartans*, tho' they acted with the Spirit 'which I am here speaking of, carried it much farther than what I propose: Among them it was 'not lawful for the Father himself to bring up his 'Children after his own Fancy. As soon as they 'were seven Years old they were all listed in several Companies, and disciplined by the Publick. 'The old Men were Spectators of their Performances, who often raised Quarrels among them, 'and set them at strife with one another, that by 'those early Discoveries they might see how their 'several Talents lay, and without any regard to 'their Quality, dispose of them accordingly for the 'Service of the Common-wealth. By this means '*Sparta* soon became the Mistress of *Greece*, and famous through the whole World for her Civil and 'Military Discipline.

'If you think this Letter deserves a Place among 'your Speculations, I may perhaps trouble you with 'some other Thoughts on the same Subject.

I am, &c.

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